

Young Adults with Autism and Transition Services to Adulthood Meeting at LOB Wednesday September 24th 2014

Hello, my name is Laura Riley and I have a 21 year old son with autism, Justin (JD). JD was diagnosed with high-functioning autism at age four through the Simsbury School system. He attended the public school system through June of his 21st year. He spent the last three years at the Farmington Valley Transition Academy, which is funded through Simsbury schools. He received a fair amount of valuable instruction on independent living skills, social skills and work ethics. With the direct help of various staff, he selected worthwhile internships that allowed him to go out into the community and work on his employment/independence skills. School was a very positive place for him and he met his PPT goals each year.

Now that he is 21, he has received his diploma and is no longer eligible to receive any services from the Simsbury School system. However, he still does not have all of the skills to enter the workforce or live independently, and there are few if any adult services to help him now that he has graduated.

It is a challenge to find productive activities for him. I find that I spend most of my free hours during the day driving him to activities, volunteer locations, etc., or trying to find a ride for him if I am not available to drive. It is also a lot of time and effort finding activities for young adults with autism. Some do exist, but they are either expensive or run by well-meaning overworked, underpaid employees or volunteers, so it is hard to get information on programs. It is a frustrating process.

It is disappointing that after the public school system (and all of the federal and local money that are poured into them) put so much energy and money into his special education needs, that at 21 it can all be for naught because programs are either unavailable or hard to find. He could begin regressing in his skills that he learned if I don't constantly work with him. And I am not a trained professional.

He still has many needs to be filled – social, educational, work and living arrangements, etc. He is 21 and physically very healthy, so with our family genes he could live another 60-70 years. It is a long time for our family to be struggling trying to continually find him services so he can lead a productive life. I am hoping and praying that there will be funds available so that JD and others on the autism spectrum can continue with their education and employment skills, and so they all can grow and become productive members of their families and society.